My Heart Advice and Secret Pith Instructions

A public talk by His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche

given in Nova Scotia, Canada in 1993

Moderator:

Welcome to today's public talk which will be given by His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche. His Holiness was born in 1933 in northeastern Tibet. Approximately, ten years ago, Rinpoche began actively offering Buddhist teachings in the Tibetan area which at that point had experienced several decades of decline of Buddhism and Buddhist practice. He is credited with the vast propagation of Buddhism in China and has been responsible for bringing tens of thousands of Tibetans, as well as many Han Chinese into the Buddhadharma in recent years.

We are extremely fortunate to have him with us this afternoon as his arrival came about as a result of a series of miraculous and logistical sequences that, in many ways, were unlikely ever to have occurred. In spite of all of the last minute scurrying about, this has resulted in our having the opportunity to invite him to be with us here in Nova Scotia, an opportunity for which we are very grateful. Therefore, we are very pleased and honored that His Holiness was able to accept our invitation and be here with us today to share his wonderful teaching. On behalf of all gathered here today, we extend to His Holiness our warmest welcome.

His Holiness:

Chanting:

Embodiments of all the buddhas of past, present and future;

all-pervasive lords of oceanic mandalas and buddha families;

glorious and noble masters whose kindness is unparalleled;

precious root gurus—

I bow down at your perfectly unblemished feet and prostrate myself in devotion.

I take refuge in you! Grant your blessings, I pray!

Who could ever tire of looking upon your noble face, as bright and clear as a flower in bloom?

And the radiant anthers of your signs and marks are like nectar for the eyes of all beings.

The petals of your compassion extend so far as to encompass the three worlds.

O Lord of Sages, White Lotus, rest your lotus feet today in the lotus pool of my mind!

On an isle in a lake in Oḍḍiyāna, from the heart of a lotus,

You appeared spontaneously as an emanation of the buddhas,

Resplendent with qualities and major and minor marks—

Padmasambhava, protect the lotus-pool of my mind!

In the expanse where all phenomena come to exhaustion, you encountered the wisdom of dharmakāya;

In the clear light of empty space, you saw saṃbhogkāya buddhafields appear;

To work for the benefit of all beings, you appeared to them in nirmāṇakāya form—

Omniscient Sovereign of Dharma, I prostrate myself before you.

The wisdom of Mañjuśrī, Lion of Speech, arose in your heart,

And you trained in the infinite aspirations of Samantabhadra,

Performing the enlightened actions of the buddhas and their heirs—

Mañjughoṣa Guru, at your feet I pay homage!

You possess the perfect form of youth,

And are adorned with the light of wisdom.

You dispel the darkness of ignorance throughout the world—

Mañjughoṣa Guru, to you I pay homage!

Now, from the wish to benefit others,

I visualize you upon the fresh lotus of my heart,

May the melodious sound of your nectar-like speech,

O Mañjuśrī, confer its splendour upon my mind!

Speech:

I start by paying homage to my extraordinary deities. My talk today will be comprised of some brief teachings central to and in accordance with the Buddhist tradition.

I. A State of Great Fortune

To begin, all of us should recognize that, at this very moment, we find ourselves in a state of great good fortune. What is this great good fortune that I am speaking of, you may ask?

1. Born in the Southern Continent of Jambudvipa

Firstly, we are very fortunate have been born into this world, which according to Buddhist cosmology, is known as the southern continent of Jambudvipa and which, in itself, is fully endowed with great fortune. Why do we say that Jambudvipa is uniquely a place of great good fortune? It is because, even though there are other continents in which human beings may be reborn that are full of great enjoyment and pleasurable experiences, such places as the eastern continent of Purvavideha, the western continent of Aparagodaniya, and the northern continent of Uttarakuru, as described in Abhidharma, these other places are not endowed with favorable conditions to practice the Buddhadharma. It is for this reason that the continent of Jambudvipa is superior to any other continent in which to be reborn.

2. Obtain the Precious Human Existence

Secondly, it is extremely precious and excellent, in and of itself, to obtain a human rebirth in the realm of Jambudvipa because of all of the endowments and freedoms that this offers. In other realms such

as the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm, the animal realm, or the asura realm, the suffering that must be endured there is unbearable and because of this there is absolutely no opportunity to practice the Dharma.

Even if one is born in the god realm of rare beauty and sensual ecstasy, because one is so consumed with the experience of pleasure, still one has no opportunity to practice the Dharma. So, for this reason, a human rebirth is more precious than a god rebirth.

Moreover, Buddha Shakyamuni presented teachings in three vehicles corresponding to the vows of the Pratimoksha, the Bodhisattva and the Vajrayana. Only one who has obtained a precious human rebirth is able to practice these teachings and to achieve their accomplishment. For someone who is born in the god or other realms, they would hardly have the opportunity to practice any of these teachings and would not be able to realize the achievement of spiritual practice in their life. For these reasons, a human rebirth is absolutely the most sublime and is more precious than any other type of rebirth.

Therefore, as followers of the Buddha, we always consider that a human rebirth offers the rarest existence in all the realms of samsara. As we have all obtained such a precious existence, we should really feel a sense of great joy.

3. Born when a Buddha has Come into the World

In addition, it is even more rare to be born in a time when a buddha has come into this world. Why is that? An eon that a buddha has come into the world is called a bright eon, and an eon in which no

buddha appears in the world is called a dark eon. As for these two types of eons, there are many more dark eons than bright ones and the occasional bright eons are interspersed among many, many dark eons. Therefore, as bright eons are very rare to encounter, to be born into a time when a buddha has come into the world and to connect directly with his teachings and put them into practice is exceedingly rare.

4. The Buddha's Teachings are Still Present

Because the Buddha has come into the world, taught the precious Dharma to living beings, and because these Dharma teachings are still present in this world, we are living among very precious conditions.

Whenever we think about our current situation, that the Buddha had turned the wheel of Dharma three times, and that all of those teachings are still accessible to us, we should really feel great joy.

5. Been Accepted by a Qualified Spiritual Teacher

Even with all of these favorable conditions, for example, that the Buddha has come into this world and taught the Dharma and that all of his teachings are still present in the world, we still need a qualified spiritual teacher who can explain these teachings to us. Without a qualified teacher, it is impossible to learn and practice these teachings by relying only on our own efforts. Indeed, it is unfortunately also rare to encounter a lama from whom one can receive the Buddha's teachings and who can guide us to put these teachings into actual practice.

So just to briefly summarize these favorable conditions in which we find ourselves: 1) being born into a human existence with all of the endowments and freedoms of the southern continent of Jambudvipa, 2) being born in a time that the Buddha has come into the world and given the Dharma teachings, and that these Dharma teachings have not vanished from the world and are still available to us, 3) being able to meet with qualified spiritual teachers who can explain these teachings to us. Therefore, among all of these fortunate eons, our present situation is as rare and fortunate as the blooming of an udumbara flower. Every time we think about this, we should give rise to a strong sense of joy and gratitude.

II. Three Levels of Faith

Fully endowed with these advantages and with all conditions so conducive, we must, first and foremost, develop a deep faith in order to achieve enlightenment.

Let us then consider, what exactly is faith? From a Buddhist perspective, we can start by saying that there are three types of faith, vivid faith, eager faith and confident faith. Vivid faith is faith that is based on strong attraction, and is inspired by thinking of the Buddha; eager faith is the faith which draws us to seek to emulate, and is inspired by thinking of the Dharma; confident faith is faith that is inspired by thinking of the Sangha. These three levels of faith are all necessary in our mind.

1. Vivid Faith

Vivid faith is a feeling of tremendous joy and happiness that comes about when we think about the Buddha.

The reason that we feel tremendous joy and happiness when thinking about the Buddha is because in this world, even when compared to Ishvara, Indra, Brahma, and many others, the Buddha possesses countless unparalleled noble qualities. For example, if a bodhisattva on the first bhumi or above were to describe the Buddha's qualities of wisdom and were to speak uninterruptedly for hundreds and thousands of years, he or she would still not be able to completely describe those qualities.

Although the Buddha possesses countless noble qualities that we are unable to fully know, we must be aware of those uncommon qualities that are of great benefit to us. What are they? The Buddha taught living beings the methods of achieving a temporary state of happiness as well as the paths to attain Buddhahood, a state which contains all miraculous abilities. Of all of his qualities, the Buddha's activities in giving these teachings to living beings are the most supreme. These are the qualities that we must be aware of because regardless of how many noble qualities the Buddha possesses, if they were of no benefit to us, there would be no reason for us to delight in them. For example, there are many kings or rulers in this world. If they cannot bring us any benefit, thinking of them brings us no joy. But if any of their actions were to greatly benefit us, then thinking of them would bring us much joy. So we must be aware of the Buddha's noble qualities that are of great benefit to us, so that we can develop sincere joy and delight in him.

What then are the Buddha's noble qualities that are of such great benefit to us? Of these, there are three primary categories: the

qualities of wisdom, the qualities of compassion and the qualities of power.

1) Wisdom

If the Buddha did not know how to set sentient beings, who are as limitless as space, free from suffering and place them in the state of permanent peace and happiness, the Buddha would be of little or no benefit to them. Yet, the Buddha is able to deliver sentient beings from suffering because he possesses the quality of omniscient wisdom.

2) Compassion

That the Buddha has the quality of omniscient wisdom, compassion is also indispensable. Without compassion, the methods employed for the sake of sentient beings would not be of true benefit. For instance, even though a person is very learned, if they have ill will towards others or a rough and offensive character, then no matter how knowledgeable he or she is, they really can't be of benefit to others. Therefore, one must possess the quality of compassion.

What kind of compassion does the Buddha possess? Take the example of the love of a mother for her only child. Multiply her love by hundreds and thousands of times, and it still falls short of the love that the Buddha has for all living beings. How have we reached this conclusion? It is because, both during his causal stage and during the time of his full enlightenment, the Buddha always dedicated his body and life to the well-being of others.

In what way did the Buddha dedicate his body and life during his causal stage in order to benefit others? At the famous Deer Park, Varanasi, where the Buddha gave the first turning of the Dharma Wheel, he gave away his own head in many lifetimes and over numerous eons in order to bring benefits and happiness to living beings. This was said by the Buddha himself after he achieved Buddhahood. The dedication of his blood and flesh for the well-being of others happened not only in Varanasi. In many places throughout the whole world, the Buddha, countless times, gave up his flesh and blood for the benefit of living beings.

Moreover, there was never a time or situation in which the Buddha showed that he possessed biased and unequal compassion. If the Buddha had expressed compassion towards those who were close to him, such as those who were attracted to him or respected him and not shown compassion to others, then this would have shown his compassion to have been biased. The Buddha' s compassion was never like this, but rather universally equal towards all beings.

So how to describe the Buddha's universal compassion? Once, when the Buddha was alive, Indra was making an offering to the Buddha by causing sandalwood powder to rain down on his right hand side, while Mara was trying to harm the Buddha with a downpour of weapons on his left. The Buddha treated them each with loving-kindness and held within his heart and mind, the wish for them both to equally be placed on the path to peace and happiness.

Also if the Buddha's loving-kindness and compassion only extended to those in higher positions or to those who are endowed with greater material wealth, but not to those who were inferior or poor,

then the Buddha’s love would not have shown its full expression. In fact, it was just the opposite. Instead of favoring those superior ones, the Buddha showed more compassion and love for those who were poor and helpless.

The Buddha’s compassion was never limited, unlike that of political leaders that most often favors their own people or race. If we think about political leaders these days, they usually express their kindness and their appreciation in front of thousands of people when there is some benefit for themselves. In contrast, even if just one sentient being was in need, the Buddha would give up his life and blood many times over. From beginningless time, the Buddha has unceasingly and tirelessly given of himself in order to be of benefit even if it was just to help one living being, even if it took innumerable eons to help them. Such love and compassion are absolutely unrivaled.

At one point during his causal stage, the Buddha was in the hell realm and he was known as Gyepakshuda, together with a friend called Kamarupa where they were forced to pull heavy wagons. The guards of the hell realm harnessed them to a wagon and beat them severely, forcing them to labor unceasingly. The future Buddha thought, “I'll pull it and suffer alone, so that Kamarupa can be relieved.” So, he said to the guards, “Put his harness over my shoulders. I'm going to pull the cart on my own. Please spare my friend from suffering.” Hearing this, the guards became even more angry and said, “No one can do anything to prevent others from experiencing their own karmic effects!” Then they just smashed him over the head with a hammer and as a result, he died and took rebirth immediately in the gods

realm of the Thirty-Three levels. This story is recorded in the Buddha's biography.

Also, in the Buddha's time, there was a former disciple of his named Devadatta, who ended up becoming one of the Buddha's greatest enemies and was always trying to compete with and even harm the Buddha. Even in the many previous lives that they shared together, there were many occasions that Devadatta tried to bring harm to the Buddha. In spite of this, the Buddha always sought to bring benefit to Devadatta even at the cost of his own body or the loss of his own life. This, along with countless other examples, shows that the Buddha's expressions of his loving-kindness and compassion are ineffable.

3) Power

Given his omniscient wisdom and unrivaled compassion, the Buddha is further endowed with great power. Without power, compassion and wisdom are not complete. This can be equated to a situation in which a poor mother with no arms sees her child being swept away by rushing water. Even though filled with an inconceivable feeling of compassion for her child, there is still nothing that she can do to save it. Likewise, compassion without power gets us nowhere in our efforts to help sentient beings.

What kind of power does the Buddha possess? There are three types of power that the Buddha possesses that relate to his body, speech, and mind.

- *The Power of the Buddha's Body*

Regarding the power of the Buddha's body: simply seeing the Buddha or being in his presence brings about the potency to liberate beings from the suffering of cyclic existence and set them on the path toward ultimate peace.

This is the benefit we gain in actually meeting with the Buddha. What then about the present day, now that the Buddha has already passed into nirvana? It still applies today. As he himself promised, "I will manifest in various forms and guide beings to perform virtues." The Buddha has manifested in various forms to benefit beings. These forms include statues, images, as well as in many other forms. Included in these forms are stupas that contain the Buddha's relics, or any of the statues that are molded in his likeness and made of gold, clay, wood, or even stone. Paying homage, making offerings to them and making aspirations in front of them, all bring about the same results as if one were to meet with the Buddha directly. This is taught in the sutras. Similarly, if someone is able to see a thangka which depicts the form of the Buddha, whether this is particularly attractive work of art or not, it will bring, to the person who views it, incredible blessings.

We have no doubt that if one with strong faith and devotion sees the form of the Buddha, then that person will accumulate merit that is beyond description. Even if one gazes upon the form of the Buddha while filled with anger, just by the connection through this experience, the person will quickly achieve Buddhahood. This is also clearly stated in the sutras.

- *The Power of the Buddha's Speech*

Regarding the power of the Buddha's speech, if during the time that the Buddha was alive, one was able to have directly received his teaching, or if in the present time, through sincerely praying to the Buddha, one eventually sees the Buddha and hears his teaching in one's pure vision or in a dream state, all of these kinds of experience will enable one to quickly develop various noble qualities and to eventually achieve Buddhahood.

The Buddha's speech includes not only the teachings directly spoken by him, but also to all the Dharma teachings that are compiled into sutras and shastras. The merit of actually hearing them is inconceivable, and can bring about the power to close the door to the lower realms, and needless to say, to extend our life, giving us the blessings of good health, longevity, endowments, etc.

Even if such beings as birds or wild animals do not have the ability to receive the teachings, just by hearing the sound of a conch being blown or a drum being beaten before the teaching, they will be freed from the sufferings of samsara and attain liberation.

- *The Power of the Buddha's Mind*

Regarding the power of the Buddha's mind, the Buddha holds great compassion and loving-kindness toward every individual and his activities of benefiting sentient beings will never stop. In the same way that it is impossible for a great ocean to be without waves, likewise, it is impossible for the Buddha to give up or terminate his activities of benefiting all beings.

Throughout all of the different worlds, from every one of the ten directions, if the form of a buddha can inspire living beings, the

Buddha will manifest as a buddha; if the form of a bodhisattva can inspire living beings, the Buddha will manifest as a bodhisattva. Similarly, if the form of a hearer or a solitary realizer can find inspiration, then the Buddha will manifest as such to them accordingly. For the benefit of those nonhuman beings like birds, wild animals, aquatic animals, etc., the Buddha will manifest in their forms accordingly to inspire and enlighten them. The Buddha can assume boundless forms for the benefits of sentient beings.

Even more, the Buddha, for the purpose of demonstrating the Dharma teaching, will manifest as mountains, forests, jungles, etc., so as to bring incredible benefits to living beings. For each and every sentient being, the Buddha always tries to benefit them, unceasingly day and night, in whatever way is deemed necessary. This is the reason why we should develop a great joy and sincere reverence towards the Buddha.

I would like to restate what I've just mentioned. The Buddha is able to benefit sentient beings, because of his omniscient knowledge of every skill to attract them. Given the Buddha's omniscience, if he did not possess great compassion, he wouldn't guide and inspire sentient beings. So, in addition to being omniscient, the Buddha possess great compassion as well. And given that the Buddha possesses omniscient wisdom and great compassion, if he didn't have power, he wouldn't be able to accomplish his great purpose of actually benefiting living beings. So, the Buddha must also have full power. In the entire world it is only the Buddha who possesses this type of unrivaled qualities in terms of wisdom, compassion and power. There is no one else in this world who can equal him in this. So, if we settle down to give a

careful thought to it, other than those who have no heart in their body or no brain in their head, everyone else will surely generate sincere faith in the Buddha.

2. *Eager faith*

Eager faith is the faith inspired by thinking of the Dharma. It is to possess the eagerness to practice in accordance with the Buddha's teaching, i.e., to accomplish what is wholesome and virtuous and to abandon what is not.

What are the wholesome and virtuous practices? In brief, it is to have the consideration of never harming others and to develop love and compassion towards all living beings. Conversely, to harbor negative thoughts or to actually show physical aversion towards any being, whether they are high, middle or low, is considered to be non-virtuous.

In order to help us abstain from harming sentient beings, the Buddha taught the four principles for Shramana [morally ethical behavior]. Shramana can be understood as all of the true followers of the Buddha. So, it follows that these four principles should be practiced by all followers of the Buddha.

First, never hold anger toward others, even when others feel angry with us. Second, do not respond with an angry retort even if you are being verbally abused. Third, even if others strike us with a stone, a stick, or other weapon, as true followers of the Buddha we should not fight back. Fourth, do not retaliate when others insult us. For instance, when someone speaks ill of our parents or says that we are ugly and penniless or that we are robbers or liars, etc., or simply

points out our faults, we should not react with vicious remarks and expose their faults in retaliation.

Buddhism teaches that “I will take defeat upon myself, and give the victory to others.” We should give to others the victory and any type of benefit and take upon ourselves defeat and loss. If someone is able to truly practice these four principles, he or she can be considered to be a true follower of the Buddha. Otherwise, although one may consider oneself as a follower of the Buddha, without practicing the four principles, one can only be said to be a nominal, and not a true follower of the Buddha.

How then can we actually put these principles into practice? One example would be that if a person on some occasion may cause you harm, you should not respond by letting your anger arise. Even if someone whom you have treated as well as you have treated your own child were to harm you, despite the fact that you have done nothing at all wrong, you should still not feel resentful. The situation is like that of a child who suffers a mental illness. No matter how he abuses his mother, the mother would never feel resentful, but rather, would only think of how to cure her child’s suffering. Likewise, to those who return our kindness with hatred, we should only wish them to be free from affliction and to attain happiness. This is the way of practicing love and compassion towards others.

If I have hurt others in the past, then it is understandable that they might wish to hurt me back in the present. So why should I become angry with them? If I have not even made a mistake as tiny as a needle point, but still someone mistreats me and harms me badly, even if they were to go so far as to cut off my head, still I should not

let my anger arise. Moreover, I should wish for any negative karma and subsequent suffering to ripen upon me. This is the type of compassion that we should generate towards others.

Also, if there are those who talk ill of me, there's no reason for me to get angry. Even if they spread rumors about me or reveal my faults on a much larger scale, maybe across many countries, I should still exalt their good qualities with a joyful mind.

If we are belittled by those who are superior to or equal with us, we may find that it is not difficult for us to accept their behaviors and practice patience. But if those who are inferior to us cast various insults upon us, not only should we never retaliate with anger, but we should also show them respect and tolerance.

This is the tradition taught by the Buddha and it is a tradition that promotes the practice of never harming and always benefiting others. This is the solely sublime path of peace and happiness.

Maybe you are thinking, "The Buddha's teaching sounds very good, however there are very few people who can truly practice these teachings." Happily, there are known methods that one can learn to follow this path. To engage oneself in all these practices is certainly too difficult for most beginners. Even for myself, a Tibetan monk and a lama, it is also not always easy to put all these teachings into actual practice. Even so, we must try our best to study and practice the Dharma in gradual stages. In the Tibetan area there are well-practiced lamas who would rather give up their lives than hurt or steal from others. Nothing would ever cause them to do these kinds of things.

From today onward, you should at the very least, take the vow of not killing any living being and not stealing from anyone. To absolutely refrain from harming anyone could be difficult for you, but you can begin to train yourselves step by step. According to the Buddha's teaching, Shramana should abandon harming others. To possess a vicious mind or engage in rude behaviors certainly disqualifies one as a true follower of the Buddha. This has been clearly taught by the Buddha. The Buddha also said, "To tame one's own mind, and to never disturb the mind of others, this is the Buddhist doctrine." Therefore, we must spare no effort to accomplish this goal.

So how to tame our mind? We should carefully watch our mind for any negative thoughts. When a strong upheaval of anger appears, when great desire or jealousy arises, or when an arrogant feeling makes us believe that we are better than others, in the moment that such negative emotions arise, we should immediately recognize them and get rid of them. Mindfulness and vigilance are indispensable to protecting our mind. Meanwhile, in order to prevent these emotional afflictions from arising in the future, we should pray to the guru and the Three Jewels for their powerful blessings.

How to not disturb the minds of others? We must renounce bad behaviors caused by the actions of our body, various kinds of rude language that arise as a result of our speech and all negative thoughts created by our mind, because all these would distress and harm others. If it happens that we have actually disturbed others either physically, verbally or mentally, it is best to eradicate such afflictions from the root. If this proves to be beyond our capacity, we should at least feel true remorse and remind ourselves that as followers of the

Buddha, disturbing the minds of others is really a shameful and unsuitable thing that we should never do again. To maintain this determination, we also need to pray to the guru and the Three Jewels to receive their blessings.

What are the benefits of taming our mind and not disturbing the minds of others? The benefits are that in this very lifetime, we will experience longevity, gain good health, beauty, wealth and respect from others, as well as many other benefits. Not only that, in a future life, we will be reborn in pure lands, such as the pure land of great bliss, Sukhavati, and achieve the status of perfect enlightenment, obtaining the ultimate happiness and never experiencing any suffering.

So, if a single person acting on their own, actually practices the Dharma, this person will be freed from suffering and gain peace and happiness; if a family practices the Dharma together, then the whole family will be endowed with happiness; if the people of an entire city were to practice the Dharma, the entire city will gain both temporary and ultimate peace and happiness and if the people of an entire country were to practice the Dharma, then that whole country will be fully endowed in this way. Eventually, if people of the whole world were to practice the Dharma, the whole world would be filled with happiness, peace and prosperity. There would be no more suffering and everywhere one looked, there would be happiness.

Every sentient being wants only to be happy and free from suffering. Nobody wants to suffer and be denied happiness. As a matter of fact, the only way to attain happiness and to be free from suffering is to practice the Buddhadharma. As we have just mentioned, if we

carefully think about and thoroughly observe the Buddha's teaching, everyone with a heart in their body or a brain in their head, will be attracted to the Dharma and will approach it with faith and reverence.

However, careful observation is a must. We Tibetans would call someone who has repeatedly examined the Buddha's teaching but still has no faith in or respect for the Buddha, a heartless or brainless person. We have in our culture the practice of calling someone like this a person without a brain or a heart. This is really not to be taken literally, as we are not saying that a person has no physical heart or brain. It's not like this. For the followers of the Buddha, the heart is not just that lump of flesh inside a physical body, the brain is also not just the white brain tissue. These physical organs are not typically emphasized in Buddhism. In fact, anyone who develops the right view in accord with Buddhist teaching can be called a person with both a heart and a brain. So, if you want to be a person with a heart and a brain, you should study and practice the Dharma purely, free of any doubt or misunderstanding. If all you know how to do is to sleep, walk around, eat and put clothes on, then this is not enough to qualify you to be thought of as someone with a heart and a brain.

The above section is an explanation of eager faith, inspired by thinking of the Dharma.

3. Confident faith

Confident faith is the faith that is inspired by thinking of the Sangha. The word Sangha means the followers of the Buddha. As a followers

of the Buddha, one's only goal is to bring benefits to oneself and to others. This is something that one should work hard to attain.

The Sangha falls into three categories in the continent of Jambudvipa: the followers of Hinayana who abstain from harming others intentionally; the followers of Mahayana, who in addition to non-harming, intentionally bring benefit to others; the followers of Vajrayana who can attain spiritual accomplishment swiftly and effortlessly, and in doing so, benefit all sentient beings extensively.

The Sangha, regardless of which category, can be thought of as trustworthy. The reason is that if you know that someone is always concerned with the welfare of others, then you will not mistrust that person. For example, you may have a friend who likes you, respects you and is happy for you when he's together with you and will also praise you when you're not around. Friends such as these are certainly true friends and deserve your trust because they will always try to help you in every way that they can. There are also some kinds of friends who will compliment you to your face while saying bad words about you behind your back. Friends such as these deserve no trust at all because they are likely to hurt you in any of a number of ways. This is the reason why we can develop confident faith in the Sangha.

III. Take Refuge in the Three Jewels

Above I've given a brief explanation of the qualities of the Three Jewels. Do you feel a sense of faith in the Three Jewels? Are you attracted to them?

My wish is from this moment onward and throughout all of your lifetimes, that you will pray to the Buddha, the unsurpassed teacher who possesses the most exalted and perfect qualities, that you will practice the Dharma of never harming beings and that you will befriend the Sangha who upholds the sublime Dharma. May you make this vow deep in your hearts. With this type of devotion and aspiration, please bring your palms together at your heart and repeat after me three times:

I take refuge in the Guru.

I take refuge in the Buddha.

I take refuge in the Dharma.

I take refuge in the Sangha.

Now all of you have received the refuge vows.

From this moment onward, you may call yourself a Buddhist. From this moment onward, whatever activities you engage in, whatever goals you want to accomplish, either spiritual or secular, you will be able to accomplish them smoothly and without any hindrance. Moreover, if any human or negative spirit tries to create obstacles for you, you will be protected by the Three Jewels. As long as you don’t abandon the Three Jewels, you can gain happiness and benefit in this life and you will no longer be forced to take rebirth in the three lower realms. If you maintain this commitment and promise in an unchanging way, then you will have truly accomplished the highest purpose of this precious human rebirth.

Now as I look around, I see that we have a mixed crowd here. Many of you here are born in Canada and some of you are born in the US. I do feel that for many of you here, today is the most meaningful and valuable day of your life. Why do I say so? Because I think for many, most of your life has more or less been spent in the pursuit of food, clothes, wealth and position. We dedicate almost our entire lifetime and so much effort on our careers, with the hope that there might be a chance that we can become as rich as the billionaire David Rockefeller. However, regardless how hard we have tried, what we have been able to accomplish is nothing out of the ordinary. Except for enough food to eat, some money and certain reputation, nothing really special is accomplished and so it seems what we've done within our entire life has not been all that meaningful. So, if we compare what you can earn through the efforts of your entire working life, the benefits you've obtained today in just this small amount of time has been more meaningful.

This is how I feel. Many of you probably are long time Buddhist practitioners. Some of you were not Buddhists before and now you are. Regardless of your past, you should develop a devoted faith in the Three Jewels. Sharing this with you makes my journey to Canada feel like something meaningful, and I believe our meeting today is a fully endowed occasion.

The training that you must try to engage in after having taken refuge includes: from this day forwards, do not forget to pray to the Buddha to help and assist you on the path; having taken refuge in the Dharma, you should try your best not to ever intentionally harm any other being; having taken refuge in the Sangha, you should respect

and cultivate confidence in the followers of the Buddha. By doing these things, all your aspirations can be fulfilled.

The content of today's lecture, as requested in the invitation letter, was to have been on the subject of compassion and wisdom. I chose not to discuss them in a simple and secular way, but rather sought to use today's discussion to encompass the Buddha's unrivalled compassion and wisdom because I believe that this will bring you immense and immediate benefits. It is for this reason that I delivered my talk in this way.

I don't consider myself to have an attractive voice, or to be skillful with words, so maybe you didn't like the way I'm talking, which is in a style that is honest and direct. Nevertheless, what I've shared with you today is something that will be a benefit to you in this and all future lifetimes. So, whether you liked my speaking style or not, I hope that you will all keep and hold my words deep in your hearts.

Thank you.